

PISHKUN, WILLOW CREEK, BENTON LAKE
NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGES

MONTANA

REFUGE PERSONNEL

John E. Schwartz, Supt. of Refuges, Missoula, Montana

Grever F. Elgen, Refuge Manager, Charle, Montana

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

Charle, Montana

PISHKUN, WILLOW CREEK, BENTON LAKE
NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGES
Narrative Report
May 1 - September 31, 1952

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I. General.

A. Weather Conditions:

Following is a table showing the weather for the general area of these three refuges.

<u>Month:</u>	<u>Precipitation:</u>	<u>Max. Temp.:</u>	<u>Min. Temp.:</u>
May	2.05	79	30
June	1.51	88	33
July	1.44	95	37
August	1.13	90	36
Total	6.13	Extremes 95	30

B. Water:

The following tables show the comparative gauge readings for Pishkun and Willow Creek reservoirs for the past five years. No formal water levels are kept at Benton Lake.

Pishkun

<u>End of:</u>	<u>1952</u>	<u>1951</u>	<u>1950</u>	<u>1949</u>	<u>1948</u>
May	4368.9	4370.9	4367.9	4370.6	4370.5
June	4363.6	4370.7	4370.0	4364.8	4367.6
July	4367.8	4366.0	4366.3	4362.0	4364.1
Aug.	4367.9	4364.0	4359.0	4362.8	4368.2
Crest of Spillway	4374.0	Bottom of Outlet 4342.0			

Willow Creek

<u>End of:</u>	<u>1952</u>	<u>1951</u>	<u>1950</u>	<u>1949</u>	<u>1948</u>
May	4139.0	4139.0	4132.3	4134.0	4135.1
June	4137.3	4136.6	4138.7	4133.5	4140.1
July	4131.0	4136.0	4138.9	4121.0	4139.4
Aug.	4131.0	4137.3	4137.0	4110.3	4132.7
Crest of Spillway	4142.0	Bottom of Outlet 4085.0			

There has been more water in Benton Lake this year than has been present for many years. In May several thousand acres were flooded by the melting snow and Spring runoff. During the first week in August the refuge Manager, and Supt. Schwartz inspected both Benton Lake and Willow Creek. At that time there was still between 700 and 1000 acres of Benton Lake covered with water.

All the potheoles surrounding Willow Creek reservoir

were dry by the first of July.

It is felt that with a small amount of money (as much as we can chisel out of the maldy marble balls) a great deal of improvement could be made at Benton Lake. By taking advantage of the natural existing conditions numerous water storage areas could be developed, which would increase the available water supply for the ducks during rearing time.

C. Fires.

None.

II. Wildlife.

A. Migratory Birds.

1. Populations and Behavior:

Since the waterfowl populations on Pishkun and Willow Creek are practically nil no estimates will be given.

A very satisfactory population of nesting ducks were observed on Benton Lake during an inspection trip in June. No accurate breed counts could be made at this time because of the extensive shallow water area and dense vegetative cover; however, local ranchers report more breeds observed than for many years. There was an estimated 5000 ducks using the refuge at the time of the inspection trip. The largest percentage of birds were Mallards with a limited number of Pintail, Gadwall, Baldpate, Shovelers, and Bl. Wg. Teal being present also.

No nests or breeds of ducks have been observed at either Pishkun or Willow Creek reservoirs.

2. Food and Cover:

As usual there is little or no feed, nesting cover, or rearing cover on Pishkun or Willow Creek for waterfowl - even if there were any birds present.

On Benton Lake food and cover conditions were excellent. Abundant water resulted in a heavy growth of one of the spike rushes, Eleocharis Sp.

B. Upland Game Birds.

Sharp-tailed grouse, ring-necked pheasant, and hungarian partridges are fairly common at Benton Lake. Only an occasional sharp-tailed grouse has been observed at Willow Creek. A few "dicky" birds are present at Pishkun.

C. Big Game Animals.

Approximately 15 head of Antelope consistently use Benton Lake. An occasional mule deer wanders through the area,

and sometimes stops for a brief visit. Illegal hunting is believed to be the cause of the low numbers and lack of yearly increment.

D. Fur Animals, Predators and Rodents.

Richardson's ground squirrels were poisoned by the personnel of the predator and rodent control office at Havre, Montana. Over 1000 baits were distributed throughout the area. a good kill resulted, as squirrels are observed only occasionally in small localized areas missed by the poisoning crew.

III. Refuge Development and Maintenance.

None during period.

IV. Economic Use of the Refuge.

A. Haying:

Seven haying permits were issued to the ranchers of the Benton Lake are for the cutting of native grass hay. No record is yet available of the amount cut.

B. Grazing:

As usual grazing was permitted on all three areas. The grazing on Pishkun and Willow Creek is under the direct supervision of the Greenfields Irrigation District.

Ten grazing permits were issued to nearby ranchers on Benton Lake. These permits totaled 1997.5 A.U.Ms. and brought in a revenue of \$1498.14. The permits covered the grazing season of July 1 through November 15.

Public Relations.

1. Recreational Uses:

Fishing is permitted at both Willow Creek and Pishkun. Extensive use is made of the picnic area at Pishkun during the fishing season.

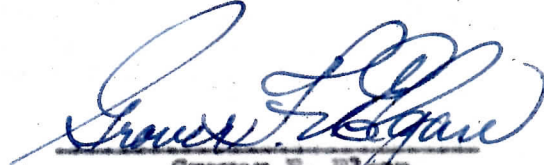
2. Refuge Participation.

Some time is spent "Politicing" with the "sportsmen" and other "V.I.P's." in Great Falls and Augusta on every inspection trip. The resulting good will on their part more than pays for the time spent.

3. Other:

Greatful appreciation is expressed to my wife, who spent two days - without pay - typing these reports. I surely wish I had a good clerk, who could take shorthand and type.

Respectfully submitted:


Grever F. Elgen
Refuge Manager

Completed September 6, 1952

Approved: _____

John E. Schwartz
Supt. of Refuges

Approved: _____

Regional Director
Fish and Wildlife Service
Region One, Portland, Ore.



17 pheasant eggs - one nest.



Water development possibility
Benton Lake